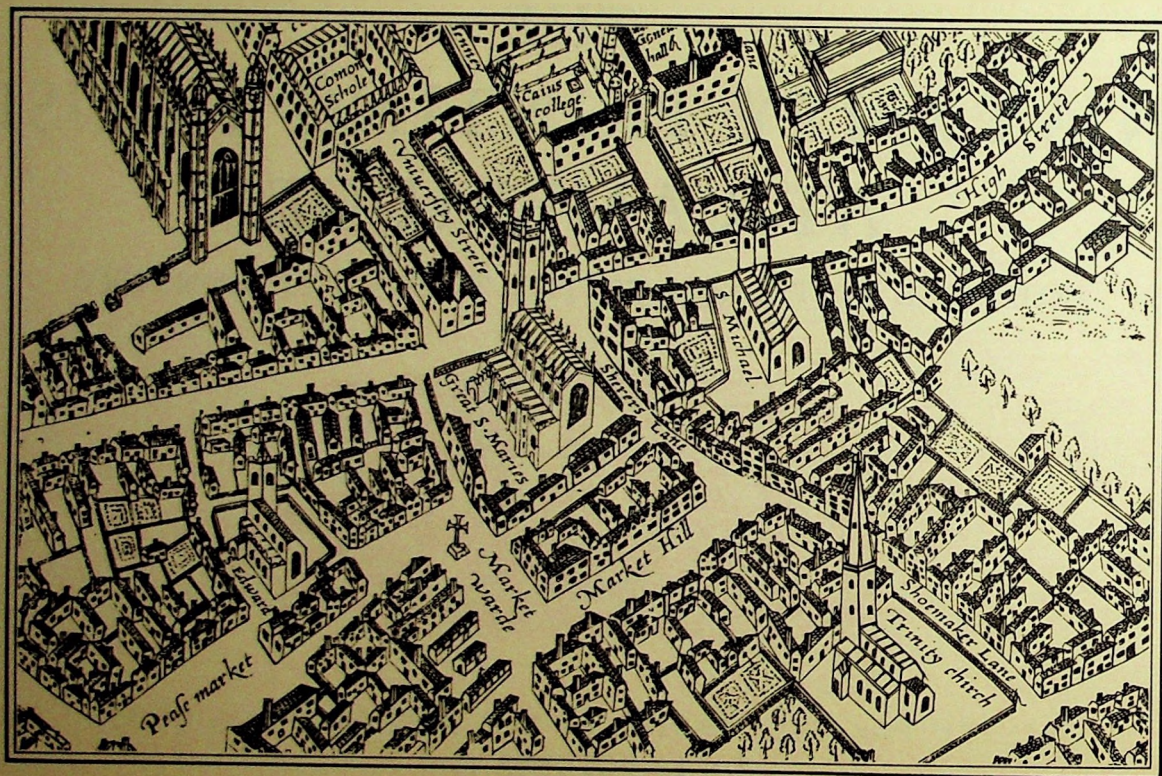


THE UNIVERSITY PRINTING HOUSES AT CAMBRIDGE

FROM THE SIXTEENTH TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY



PRINTED FOR THE OPENING OF THE NEW PRINTING HOUSE
ON 24 OCTOBER 1963



JOHN SIBERCH (John Laer of Siegburg, near Cologne), who printed ten books in Cambridge between 1520 and 1523, occupied a tenement called the King's Arms, the site of which now forms part of Tree court in Gonville and Caius college. Perhaps the house's signboard was used as a pattern for the woodcut of the royal arms which appears on the title page of a Latin rendering of the speech delivered by John Fisher in London on the occasion of the public burning of Luther's books. Siberch claimed to print with royal grace and privilege but, although he received a loan of twenty pounds from the chest, he held in fact no official university appointment. In 1534 Cambridge obtained a charter from Henry VIII authorizing it to appoint 'three stationers and printers, or sellers of books...empowered to print all manner of books approved of by the Chancellor or his vicegerent and three doctors, and to sell and expose to sale in the university or elsewhere within the realm, as well such books as other books printed within or without the realm'. For almost fifty years, however, those appointed under this authority confined their activities to the selling of books produced elsewhere, and there was no printing at all in or around Cambridge unless it was by that shadowy figure Remigius Guidon, who was settled close to the Abbey church in Ditton by Thomas Thirlby, bishop of Ely, and there started up the second paper mill to operate in Britain. The evidence rests upon an account of a visit to England made in 1550-51 by Christoffel Froschauer, nephew and successor to the eminent Zürich printer of that name. He met there 'Remigius Guidon from

Lothringen who was an expert papermaker and printer. From his own mouth I heard how at the court of Edward VI and other great men of the time he made paper with great skill, and also so demonstrated the printer's art before their eyes that they could see and understand how printers' shops and paper mills worked; on the strength of this, he was also appointed King's printer at Cambridge.'

The first university printer, properly so called, was Thomas Thomas, a fellow of King's college, who was appointed in 1583 and occupied a house in Regent walk (shown on Hammond's plan opposite as 'University Strete'), with an adjoining shop on the corner of High street, directly opposite the west door of Great St Mary's church. Thomas was associated with the Puritan movement in Cambridge, which led to his being harassed by the Church at the same time as the Stationers' company, jealous of its privileges, was seizing and burning his books. Strongly supported by the university authorities, however, he persisted with his printing until his early death in 1588.

The equipment and materials he left behind included one press (all he was allowed by a Star Chamber decree of 1586), six frames, seventeen pairs of cases, four galleys, some fifty reams of paper and over a ton of type. His stock of books, bound or in sheets, was divided between the shop and garret, which evidently served for a warehouse. The business was taken over by John Legate, whose wife was a daughter of Thomas's widow by an earlier marriage. Well qualified though he was as a printer, in the eyes of his mother-in-law

he was far from satisfactory as a tenant. She eventually sued him for debt in the vice-chancellor's court, on the grounds that he had not met his obligations under the deal she had made with him and alleging incidentally that she had been called a 'drabb' and that the line 'whereon certaine weet linning... did hang to dry' had been cut. In his defence Legate stated that Mrs Thomas charged him £30 a year, whereas his half of the house was not in fact worth above £4 and had cost him a great deal in repairs; moreover, he stated, Mrs Thomas claimed the use of the kitchen, the only place in which he could dress and eat, and she made a passage of his bedchamber.

Legate continued to use Thomas Thomas's printing house in Regent walk (by 1591 he had equipped it with at least two presses) and the corner bookshop adjoining. But he had other premises besides these for carrying on his trade. In October 1588, a month before his formal appointment as printer to the university, he had rented from the master and fellows of Trinity college 'two shops late in the tenure of Thomas Bradshaw stationer, in the parrish of Great St Mary's, next the market place, adjoining the west end of the parish church, builded upon the churchyard wall: the one at the north-west corner of the church, containing in length 24 feet 3 inches, abutting upon the high street towards the west; the other at the south-west corner, in length 24 feet 3 inches as now builded: paying yearly 6s. 8d. at michaelmas'. Three years later he took a lease of another shop in St Mary's parish for an annual rent of five shillings. Probably some of this accommodation was needed for storage of his sheets;

besides the stock which Thomas had left, Legate's own press was quite prolific. Part of it may have served for a bindery.

One of Legate's apprentices was Cantrell Legge, who was appointed a printer to the university in 1606, three years before Legate himself departed for London. He occupied a house on Market hill, next to the Rose inn, and probably carried on his printing there, along with his partner Thomas Brooke. His business methods, however, must have been somewhat haphazard, if we accept his own statement in Chancery that 'he never kept any booke or note in writing'. Leonard Greene, appointed in 1622, had a shop 'at the south side of the steple' of Great St Mary's which he leased from Bene't college, but he may also have used the work-rooms in Regent walk which Thomas and Legate had occupied. Certainly he complained that Thomas Buck, who with his brother John joined him in partnership in 1625, had deserted the old printing-house 'which Thomas and Legate had successivelie all their time hired' and had taken instead a lease of the Angel inn a few doors farther away than Legge's house, on the site lately occupied by Messrs Macintosh.

Thomas Buck was indeed a man of independent ways, a scholar like Thomas Thomas, a fellow of St Catharine's, active in the affairs of university and town. After Greene's death in 1630 he and John brought their brother Francis into partnership, but two years later Francis retired in favour of Roger Daniel. The accommodation at the Angel inn was evidently inadequate and Buck proceeded to hire part of the former Augustinian friary which occupied a site now



*The Refectory of St. Augustine's Monastery Cambridge —
1780 —*

bounded by Bene't street and Wheeler street on the north, Corn Exchange street on the east, Pembroke street on the south and Free School lane on the west. Later he bought the property outright and lived there till his death.

The water-colour of Buck's house here reproduced is preserved in the university library. Another sketch, made in 1770, is included among the antiquarian manuscripts of William Cole, who describes it as 'the West Prospect of what remains of the Priory of St Austin in Cambridge, late the Dwelling House of Mr Buck [Thomas's nephew, to whom he bequeathed it], and now the House belonging to the Curator of the Botanic Garden'. In his agreement with Buck, Daniel was granted 'that Capitall messuage and tenement called the Augustine Fryers wherein the said Thomas Buck now dwelleth together with the printing house and all other houses yards orchards closes wayes and all other easements and commodities thereunto belonging. Except . . . all that chamber over the parlor commonly called the great chamber together with the green chamber and cole house thereunto adjoining, as also two studies in the correcting roome.' During the civil war the building served briefly as quarters for royalist troops.

The agreement between Buck and Daniel contains an inventory of the stock-in-trade, which shows how far the business of a university printer had grown since the time of Thomas Thomas: 'six printing presses, five copper plates, six bankes, seven great stones, one muller, thirteen frames to set cases on . . . two frames to put cases in, six and

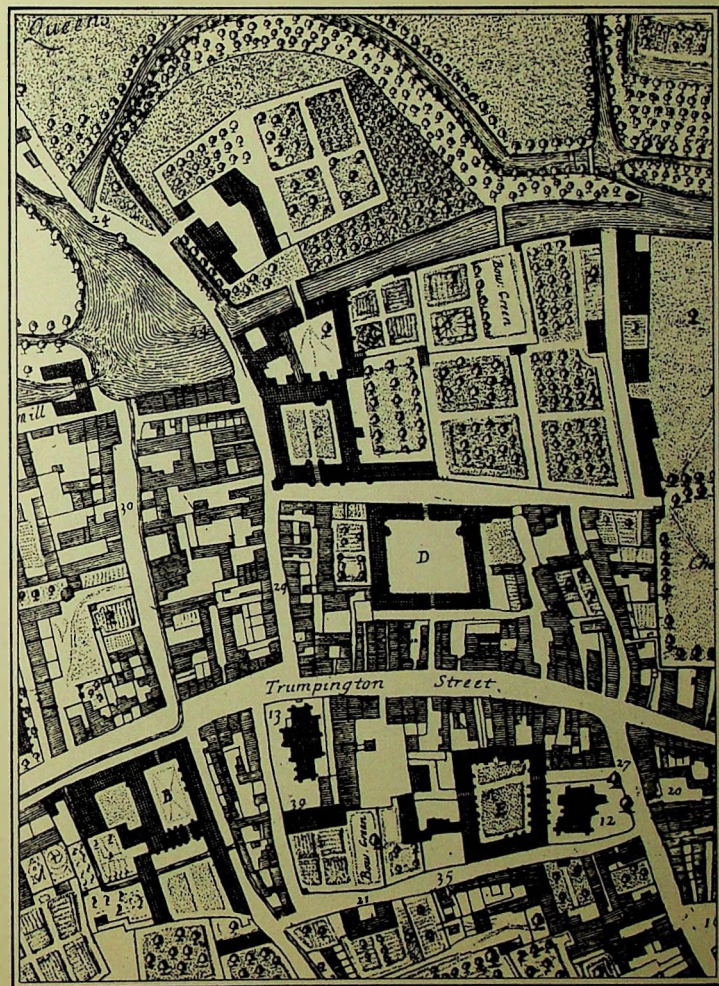
fifty paire and an halfe of cases for letters made of mettle and one case for wooden letters, five and twenty chases, twenty gallies, fifty paper and letter bords, two tressell tables, four tables with drawers, two troughs of lead and all the shelves and formes of deal in the wool-house'. Daniel undertook to pay an annual rent of £190 and to use paper, ink and type 'very commendable and good so as the University may receive credit and honour thereby'.

From this printing house issued many distinguished works, including Milton's *Lycidas* (contained in the *Obsequies to the memorie of Mr Edward King*) and books by John Donne, Richard Crashaw, George Herbert, William Harvey, Thomas Fuller and Lancelot Andrewes. The first Cambridge edition of the Authorized Version appeared in 1629, and legend has it that Buck and Daniel were so well satisfied with their 1638 edition that they posted a notice offering a free bible to anyone who could find a fault in it.

But, although the partnership of Buck the scholar and Daniel the businessman was to produce such excellent results, it was not an amicable one. In a petition to the vice-chancellor Daniel declared that Buck was 'continually defaming chydying and brawling with your petitioner, often fighting with, beating, threatning and vexing your petitioners servants, so your petitioner and they are weary of their lives'. Buck appears to have retired from active participation in 1640 and Daniel, after getting himself into trouble for publishing contentious tracts and causing the vice-chancellor himself to be summoned before the House of Commons, was relieved of his patent ten

years later for neglect. He was succeeded as university printer by a second John Legate, whose patent was in turn cancelled for neglect in 1655. John Field, who followed him, had been printer to Parliament and was a protégé of Cromwell.

In the extract, shown here, from Loggan's plan of Cambridge (1688) Buck's house and garden can be seen near the bottom right corner, on the east side of Free School lane (known as Luthborne lane until Dr Perse built his free school there), with St Bene't's church (12) and Corpus Christi college (E) directly opposite. Further west, across Trumpington street and behind the frontage of houses, is St Catharine's college (D); a garden on its south side separates it from a long building which was the printing house built by John Field in 1655. The land, leased to the university by Queens' college, is now occupied by the house and front garden of St Catharine's master's lodge. Field lived in an adjacent house in Silver street, possibly the one at the corner of Queens' lane which successors of his are known to have occupied; according to the hearth tax returns for 1666 he had seven hearths, '3 added by new building since Lady day 1661'. A description of the printing house is preserved in the diary of an American judge, Samuel Sewall, who visited it during the occupancy of Field's successor, John Hayes: 'by it [Katherine Hall], the Printing Room, which is about 60 feet long and 20 feet broad. Six Presses. Had my cousin Hull and my name printed there. Paper windows, and a pleasant Garden along one side between Katherine Hall and that.' According to a plan





preserved in the university archive, the 'printing room' was in fact 79 feet long and 22 feet wide.

Hayes became heavily committed to the Stationers' company and produced little in the way of learned printing, which led to a move by the university, inspired by Richard Bentley, the redoubtable master of Trinity, to build a press of its own. A syndicate of senior members was set up to govern it and a building, erected in 1638 as a stage house or acting chamber, was acquired from Queens', opposite the college gateway. Part of it was demolished and the remainder incorporated in a new but more compact printing house designed by Robert Grumbold and completed in 1698. The original intention was that Hayes should occupy it, leaving the 1655 building for the university's own press, of which a Dutchman, Cornelius Crownfield, was put in charge. But Hayes refused to move and the newer building was perforce used by the university until after his death. The drawing from *The Cambridge Portfolio* (1840) shows its frontage on Queens' lane; the two doorways, of which the nearer seems to have led to the garden, remain to this day.

The cost of this building was defrayed by subscriptions from the chancellor (the Duke of Somerset) and other well-wishers. John Evelyn the diarist wrote enthusiastically about 'that noble presse which my worthy and most learned friend [Bentley] . . . is with great charge and industrie now erecting at Cambridge', but his promise of financial support does not seem to have matured. The bills of various tradesmen engaged in the operation, bricklayer, carpenter, joiner,

glazier, plumber and smith, have survived; from these and other documents Dr D. F. McKenzie has built up a convincing account (soon to be published) of this first true university press and its equipment. When Crownfield moved out in 1707, to occupy Field's building, it was let as a warehouse. Nine years later it was handed over to the professors of chemistry and anatomy, and after serving for some years as an anatomical theatre it was eventually pulled down in the middle of the nineteenth century.

The design prepared by James Gibbs in 1715 for a 'public building' for the university included a printing room situated above the registry's office, which would have placed it almost exactly where Thomas Thomas's shop had stood. However, only a part of the scheme, the present senate house, was carried out. Crownfield's successors, Joseph Bentham (1740-66) and John Archdeacon (1766-95), continued to occupy the printing house which Field had built. Bentham lived in the house at the corner of Silver street and Queens' lane which had belonged to Matthew Stokes, registry of the university from 1588 to 1591. Over the chimney-piece in the parlour, according to Cole, was a coat of arms belonging to Stokes, 'carved very handsomely and very large'; it hung in the printer's office until the 1930's, when it was transferred to the registry's. Bentham's house is seen on the left of Le Keux's 1837 engraving of Queens' gateway. Field's printing house, which abutted on to it, had by then been demolished. On the right of the picture there is a glimpse of the back of Grumbold's building, soon to be demolished too.





During the 1730's a London stationer called William Fenner set up a partnership with Thomas and John James and obtained a licence from the university in order to exploit William Ged's stereotyping process in the production of bibles and prayer-books. The venture came to nothing, though one of the four books printed by William Fenner, an octavo *Book of Common Prayer*, may be the very first book to be at least partly printed from cast plates. With a single book over her own imprint, Bentley's Boyle lectures, his widow achieved the distinction of being the only female university printer; its title page carried a cut of Gibbs's rejected scheme. Mary Fenner's printing house was in Market hill. John Baskerville, who also obtained a licence from the university in order to print bibles and prayer-books, lodged, according to tradition, in the old Radegund manor house which stood on the site of All Saints vicarage in Jesus lane. His magnificent folio bible was published in 1763.

It is just over two hundred years ago that the syndics of the Press took the first step in moving to the south side of Silver street. In 1762 they purchased an inn, the White Lion, on the site of which they erected, twenty-four years later, a four-floor warehouse. In 1804 this building was converted into a printing house, to be seen half way down the left side of the street in Challis's drawing for *The Cambridge Almanack*, and adjoining it a foundry was set up in which to produce stereotypes for the printing of bibles and prayer books. Ged's patent of eighty years earlier had come to nothing, but now an agreement was made between the university and Andrew Wilson,

a London printer to whom the ingenious Lord Stanhope had made over his own more successful process.

With this help the syndics' business expanded and soon their accommodation had again become inadequate. In 1820 the university purchased from James Nutter, of a well-known milling family, a considerable property which stretched southwards from their existing printing house as far as Mill lane. Here was built, to the design of James Walter, the three-floor building which stands to this day on the west side of the Press quadrangle; excluding basements it provided some 10,000 square feet of space. A living-house was also built for the printer, John Smith, with a front door on to Mill lane.

In 1824 the vice-chancellor was approached by the Marquess Camden, who was chairman of a committee appointed 'to consider the disposal of the surplus Money subscribed, many years ago, for the Erection of a Statue to the Memory of Mr Pitt'. He was authorized, he wrote, to report 'the disposition of that Committee to recommend to a general Meeting of Subscribers to the Fund above-mentioned the Disposal of a considerable Sum of Money for the Erection of an handsome Building connected with the University Press at Cambridge; but, as it will be necessary to state to the general Meeting how far the University is disposed to find and provide a proper Scite for the erecting such Building, near or opposite to Pembroke College, I now trouble you on that subject, and I request you will have the goodness to inform me how far I may be authorized to inform the General Meeting of the Disposition of the University

to find and provide a proper Scite as above-mentioned for the erecting of an handsome Building, which the Committee is desirous should be erected on such a scale as to be a distinguished Ornament to the University, and tend to perpetuate the Name and Memory of Mr Pitt'.

The proposal was indeed acceptable to the university and the site which immediately suggested itself was the frontage along Trumpington street between Silver street and Mill lane. In the centre was the Cardinal's Cap, an ancient inn, which formed part of the property purchased from Nutter. The houses on either side were soon added and Edward Blore was engaged as architect. It was really the central block in which the committee was interested, with its lofty entrance hall and oriel room above, surmounted by a tower. The two wings, with separate doors to the inner court, might be used for any purpose the syndics desired, so long as it did not interfere with those parts which the committee 'thought should be ornamental'. It was agreed that the façade on Trumpington street ought to be of a piece and, after a good deal of public argument, that the ends of the building should also be faced in stone. Blore did not find it altogether easy to please his clients and at one stage threatened to throw in his hand; but the design was eventually agreed and the building completed at a total cost of £10,711. 8s. 9d., nearly £2000 more than the sum originally offered.

It was opened on 28 April 1833 with suitable ceremony and sententious speeches from Lord Camden and the vice-chancellor. For a hundred years, however, the Press made no significant use of it.



The central portion, with its handsome oriel room, served in turn for a geological exhibition and for an overflow of paintings and drawings from the Fitzwilliam museum. Later it was taken over by the registry and for many years served as the central office of the university. A caretaker was housed in part of the north wing; the remaining space was used for the storage of printed sheets. The water-colour (by George Belton Moore) was probably commissioned by the architect to show his proposals; much of the ornament above the door and below the oriel was not in fact carried out.

At the same time as the Pitt building was being planned, Blore was invited to design that addition to the printing house which forms the north side of the quadrangle. The following years saw the introduction of steam power and the installation of an apparatus 'for warming the Press building by means of heated air'; but the accommodation was not enlarged until the formation of a partnership with the Clay family in 1854 led to a further expansion of business. From 1870 onwards hardly a decade has passed without building activity along Silver street or Mill lane or in the area lying between. A building on the south side of the quadrangle was erected in 1893 to provide a library and syndicate room and offices for the secretary, the upper floor being added some thirty years later.

In 1936, after the building of the new university library, the registry moved to quarters in the Old Schools and Mr John Murray Easton was charged with the alteration of the Pitt building to provide larger offices for the printing department. The following year saw

the demolition of the house in Mill lane which had been built for John Smith and which, after accommodating the Clays' manager, Alfred Mason, had been turned into offices and readers' rooms. As the mechanization of printing processes advanced, the heterogeneous collection of buildings which had grown up since 1786 became increasingly inconvenient, and successive printers advanced proposals for abandoning them in favour of new construction. J. B. Peace fancied a site off Hills road, not far from the railway station, probably in the area now occupied by the bus station and Heffer's printing works. Walter Lewis advocated a building on two floors between the printing house as it stood then and the river. A later proposal, in the 1930's, was for a major reconstruction on the site of the existing buildings and sketch plans were actually prepared by Mr Easton. For one reason or another, however, all these schemes were rejected and it was not until after the second world war (when, incidentally, the university's need of central space had become acute) that the syndics decided to erect a building properly designed for modern needs and large enough to cope with still greater output.

The site they selected lies to the south of the city between Hobson's brook and the Cambridge-London railway, and once formed part of Brooklands farm. It belonged to Clare college, who had it from Trinity college, as part of a larger purchase, in 1931; and Trinity college had it from Jesus college, as part of a still larger purchase, thirty-four years before that. The area acquired by the syndics, including a small triangle of land exchanged with the Ministry of

Works, amounts to seventeen acres, providing ample space for a mainly single-floor building of 220,000 square feet with room for expansion to the west and south, as well as for car and cycle parks and a playing field. Access was secured by the purchase of some six acres between this site and Fitzwilliam road, through which a new road has been laid.

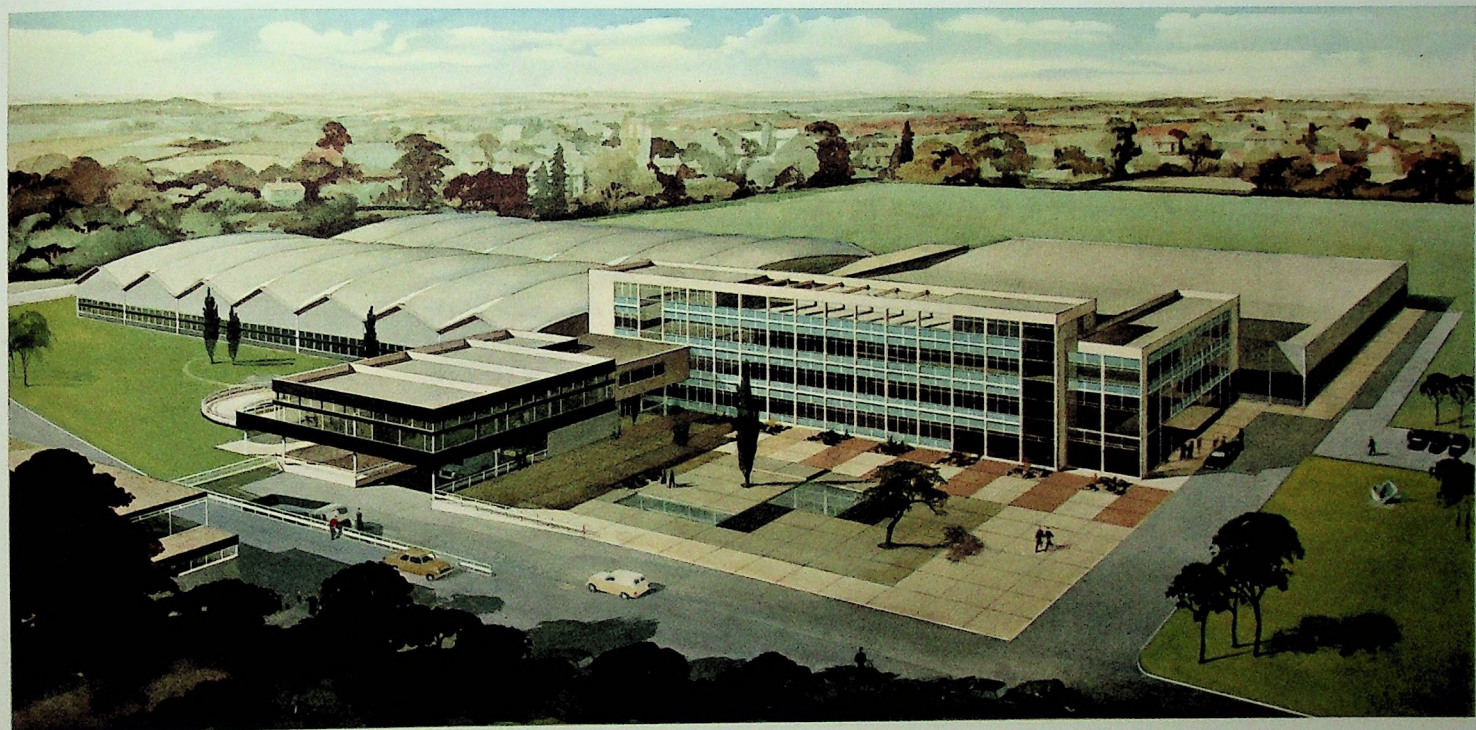
The perspective drawing reproduced opposite was painted by J. R. Stammers. It shows the office block looking east over a paved court, with the composition block behind it. On the left at first-floor level is the south-facing lunch room; and the largest block, with arched roof, houses the printing room, bindery and warehouse. All departments are linked by a corridor running east and west through the middle of the building, and the circulation, both of persons and work, has been most economically contrived. Great care has also been taken to create a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere throughout, for example by acoustical treatment of surfaces, exclusion of outside noise, controlled temperature and humidity, and the provision of non-working areas with pleasant outlooks where workers may break off for refreshment.

The architects are Messrs Beard, Bennett, Wilkins and Partners; the principal consultants Messrs Frederick Snow and Partners for structural engineering, Messrs Harold Young and Associates and Leonard Schwarz and Partners for services, and Associated Design Partnership for colour schemes; the main contractors Messrs Johnson and Bailey. Much help and guidance has also been given

by the Cambridge-based applied psychology unit of the Medical Research Council. The building represents a protracted and closely reasoned effort to provide the best possible conditions for the production of learned printing, much of it complicated and all of it demanding a high degree of accuracy and finish. For, as printing processes have become more complex, so has the nature of the work to be done.

The initial equipment consists of twenty-four monotype keyboards, twenty-three casting machines, frames and composing surfaces for some sixty compositors, desks for thirty-five proof readers, and a substantial foundry for making both metal and plastic plates. In the machine room are six rotary and twenty-three flatbed presses. The bindery of 24,000 square feet is fitted up for the production of 30,000 books a week and for wrapped books, journals and pamphlets to an even larger number. A feature of the whole layout is the breakdown into comparatively small areas, so as to keep a human scale and avoid the impersonal effect of overlarge halls and working groups.

The office block accommodates order office, work study, progress control, accounts, drawing, library, first aid and general administration. Installed here too are some of the Press's treasures from the past, notably the actual punches from which the type for Baskerville's folio bible was cast; typographical equipment of the great private presses of Kelmscott, Ashendene, Eragny and Cranach; drawings and layouts of many recent masters of typography; and examples of fine printing from the present and the past.



This account owes much to the researches, published or unpublished, of Sir Sydney Roberts, D. F. McKenzie, H. C. Porter, C. J. Sisson and M. H. Black; and of the late Cyprian Blagden, R. Willis and J. W. Clark, A. B. Gray, G. J. Gray and A. E. Reeve. The water-colour of the Pitt building on page 12 is reproduced by kind permission of Miss K. M. Peace, and the illustrations on pages 2, 5, 7 by kind permission of the syndics of the university library. All the illustrations were printed by offset-litho by Messrs W. S. Cowell of Ipswich. The drawing on the cover is by John Peters and the engraving on the title-page dates from the early eighteenth century

